

## ESTABLISHING EMERGENCY PREVENTION PROGRAMS

*GOAL: Your community has in place an emergency homelessness prevention program that includes rent/mortgage/utility assistance, case management, landlord/lender intervention, and other strategies to prevent eviction and homelessness.*

The most economically efficient way to end homelessness is to prevent its occurrence. Financial assistance to prevent an eviction, mediation to address problems with a landlord or lender, and case management can all prevent individuals and families from becoming homeless. A 1991 study of eviction prevention programs by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services found that the average cost to prevent family homelessness was one-sixth the average cost of a stay in a shelter. Yet a recent examination of the continuum of care planning process found that few of the communities studied dedicate substantial resources to preventing homelessness.

Among the innovations that are developing in the area of emergency homelessness prevention are:

- Enhancing coordination and information sharing among emergency assistance (including rent/mortgage and utility assistance) providers to ensure all existing prevention dollars are maximized.
- Moving beyond one-time eviction prevention payments to providing time limited housing subsidies until families become financially stable.
- Combining emergency assistance with either time limited or ongoing case management to reduce future risk of homelessness.
- Targeting new homelessness prevention/emergency assistance efforts to the neighborhoods that a disproportionate number of people seeking shelter are exiting.
- Integrating homelessness prevention activities at the intake sites for shelters in an effort to identify if resources/services could be deployed to prevent homelessness.

### Examples

#### **Hennepin County Homelessness Prevention Program** (Hennepin County, Minnesota)

The county contracts with eighteen non-profit agencies to deliver services that include financial assistance, case management and other assistance to eligible families to prevent

the loss of housing. A description can be found on line at:  
<http://www.endhomelessness.org/best/prevention.htm>

**The Philadelphia Housing Support Center** (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania) The Housing Support Center coordinates housing and service resources from various City social service departments through one central gateway. Pulling together diverse resources, the Center serves as a "one-stop shop" to meet housing needs—providing both prevention and re-housing assistance. To complement its prevention services, PHSC participates in the Youth Housing Continuum Task Force to ensure that youth aging out of foster care have safe and adequate housing plans. A description is on line at:  
<http://www.endhomelessness.org/best/SupportCenter.htm>

**Project SAFE** (Everett, Washington) Project Safe intervenes with youth and families to prevent young people from becoming homeless. A description is on line at:  
<http://www.endhomelessness.org/best/ProjectSAFE.htm>

## **Resources**

- The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development has developed a guidebook on how Emergency Shelter Grants are being utilized to prevent homelessness. The guidebook contains a selection of best practices. *Homelessness Prevention in the Emergency Shelter Grants Program* is available on line at:  
<http://www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/homeless/library/esg/esgprevention2.PDF>.
- M. Shinn and J. Baumohl (1999). Rethinking the Prevention of Homelessness. In L. B. Fosburg and D. L. Dennis (ed.) *Practical Lessons: The 1998 National Symposium on Homelessness Research*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Available on line at: <http://aspe.hhs.gov/progsys/homeless/symposium/13-Preven.HTM>.